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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ABUJA 000590

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, INR/AA  
DEPARTMENT FOR SUSAN MCCARTY AND MIKE BITTRICK  
BAGHDAD FOR DMCCULLOUGH

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TAGS: [ECOWAS](#) [KPKO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [SNAR](#) [PU](#) [GV](#) [CU](#) [PO](#)  
SG, CV, GH, NI  
SUBJECT: ECOWAS' RESPONSE TO EVENTS IN GUINEA-BISSAU

REF: ABUJA 418

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Classified By: Political Counselor Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: On April 2, Poloff met with ECOWAS Director of Political Affairs Dr. Abdel Fatah-Musa to discuss ECOWAS' next steps in Guinea-Bissau. Fatah-Musa, who has long followed Guinea-Bissau politics, related background information about what he said had led to the double assassinations of President Bernardo Vieira and Armed Forces Chief of Staff Baptista Tagme Na Wai, and then described ECOWAS' plans to work with its international partners to assist Guinea-Bissau in reforming its security sector and holding credible elections. He suggested that the USG could be most helpful in assisting to provide funding to security sector reform (SSR), as a counter to Portugal who, in his view, has been obstructionist and unhelpful in ECOWAS' efforts to stabilize Guinea-Bissau. He also said that the U.S. would be invited to an April 20 summit in Praia, Cape Verde, to try and coordinate SSR details; at the moment his best guess was that Guinea Bissau would need an eventual deployment of a military/police contingent numbering around 2000 personnel. Poloff told Fatah-Musa he was in a listening mode on the issue, but would pass along ECOWAS' desire for the USG to provide funding for SSR assistance. Meanwhile, Ambassador has been clear with GON Foreign Minister Maduekwe in his capacity as representing President Yar'Adua in his current capacity as Chairman of ECOWAS what the USG views are regarding involvement in Guinea Bissau's current challenges (reftel). Maduekwe has led the two ECOWAS assessment teams to the country that followed the assassinations. END SUMMARY.

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The Unkindest Cut of All  
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12. (C) On April 2, Poloff met with ECOWAS Director of Political Affairs Dr. Abdel Fatah-Musa to discuss events in Guinea-Bissau and ECOWAS' plans to stabilize the country. (FYI: Fatah-Musa has been a regular visitor to Bissau over many years as part of numerous ECOWAS delegations, and has been extensively involved in formulating and implementing ECOWAS' response to the crisis, precipitated by the March 1-2, 2009, assassinations of Armed Forces Chief of Staff General Baptista Tagme Na Wai and President Joao Bernardo Vieira. End FYI.) Describing years of tension between the two men which stretch back to the 1980s, he said that when Vieira captured Na Wai during the 1998 civil war, Na Wai was castrated under Vieira's direct supervision. Fatah-Musa said that Na Wai's men allegedly returned the favor after murdering Vieira in front of his wife -- not decapitating him as widely reported but instead removing his genitals in order to make a statement. (Comment: This contradicts what GON FonMin reported to Ambassador on March 8. FonMin said Vieira's wife told him when he was in Guinea Bissau that she was sent for safety to the Angolan Embassy just prior to Vieira's killing (reftel). However, we note that what Fatah-Musa told us is indicative (whether it is true or not) of the level of animosity between Vieira and Na Wai. End Comment.) When Vieira returned to power via the 2005 elections, however, Na Wai's appointment as Chief of Staff was an unavoidable reality, as he was a senior member of Guinea-Bissau's single largest tribe, the Balantes, which are heavily overrepresented in the military. Fatah-Musa described the bomb blast that killed Na Wai as a "narco-style" assassination method previously unknown in Guinea-Bissau but favored by drug traffickers, lending evidence to the depth of Vieira's involvement with them.

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(Note: In GON FonMin conversation with the Ambassador on March 8, the FonMin said he believed that narco-traffickers were involved in both assassinations. End note.)

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Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way  
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13. (C) Fatah-Musa described ECOWAS' effort to mount a robust response to the crisis, but complained that it was being frustrated by Portuguese obstructionism. After ECOWAS agreed with Portuguese Foreign Minister Luis Amado to convene an international contact group (ICG) meeting "as soon as possible" after the assassinations, he said that ECOWAS President Mohamed Ibn Chambas received a call from a "junior officer" of the Portuguese Foreign Ministry who said that Amado's busy schedule precluded his attendance at any meeting in the coming weeks. Undaunted, Chambas attempted to convene a March 20 ICG meeting without Amado's participation, but in the end was forced to scuttle it after the Portuguese Foreign Ministry told other potential group members that it was "not safe" to meet in Bissau. Fatah-Musa said Chambas wants the Portuguese to be edged out of the process, and wants instead to copy the steps taken in Guinea, giving ECOWAS and the African Union leading roles in resolving the crisis. He believed looking to Portugal to take the lead in Guinea-Bissau, as the US has done in Liberia and the UK has done in Sierra Leone, was a waste of time. Fatah-Musa also said that the UN had been discredited in the eyes of Guinea-Bissau's stakeholders, having ignored a request from Vieira after the November 2008 assassination attempt for international intervention to help stabilize the country and protect him. (Note: Per reftel, Vieira also requested help from Nigeria. End Note.) Fatah-Musa also commented that he believed that Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon was insulated from reality by his "Asian cronies," and as a result Africa was slipping downward on the UN's agenda.

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What Next  
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14. (C) Fatah-Musa said that ECOWAS' goals in the coming months include partnering with the AU and UN to launch a full investigation of the events of the past months, to push for the punishment of the perpetrators of crime and mayhem, and to take steps to rein in the unchecked influence of narcotraffickers. ECOWAS flatly rejects the approach by Portugal, which is to promote national reconciliation via a sort of amnesty that ignores the egregious wrongs of the past and present. Guinea and Cape Verde will join Guinea-Bissau as the objects of ECOWAS' first attempts to implement its anti-narcotics plan, agreed upon in an October 2008 summit in Praia. Fatah-Musa affirmed that elections most likely would take place on June 28, as reported in the press, and that ECOWAS was satisfied with this timetable. He predicts that Prime Minister Carlos Gomes will easily win the poll, being a popular man in a field lacking viable candidates. He said that of the \$5 million needed to run fair and credible elections, only \$900,000 has so far been pledged by the international community, but that does not include \$500,000 to come from ECOWAS' budget and a number of likely pledges by European countries.

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Tearing out the Rotten Plant  
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15. (C) SSR is Guinea-Bissau's biggest immediate need,

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Fatah-Musa said, as the present military was thoroughly rotten and needs to be torn out, "root and branch." ECOWAS envisions an international deployment of soldiers and/or police that can maintain stability while the dicey work of stepping up new security forces continues. Some of the military will need to be bought off, and others sent out of the country, and the inverted pyramid ratio of officers to men will need to be "right-sized." He says he believes there should be a force of around 2000, but could offer few details; the modalities, he said, would be worked out at an April 20 meeting in Praia, to which the US would soon be invited to send representation. A few things were clear however: of the countries reportedly considering sending troops (including West African neighbors, as well as Cuba, Brazil, and Angola), he believed some would not/not be welcome, particularly Senegal and Gambia, due to their governments' past meddling.

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The USG's Role  
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16. (C) Fatah-Musa says ECOWAS hopes the USG will attend the April 20 conference as an observer, but also encourage that ECOWAS and the AU take the lead in finding a solution, rather than Portugal. He also hopes that we will work to draw in the Spanish, who have shown a burgeoning interest in Guinea-Bissau due to the increasing amounts of illegal narcotics and illegal immigrants arriving on their shores from Bissau. More importantly, he said ECOWAS is hoping for a USG role in the form of a significant contribution in support of the deployed ECOWAS-hoped for international force that will keep the lid on the chaos that could flourish during the SSR process outlined above -- such a contribution would preferably take the form of funding, but could also be in the forms of equipment and expertise, he said. Poloff said he would pass along Fatah-Musa's views to Washington.

17. (C) COMMENT: Poloff was strictly in a listening mode with Fatah-Musa. However, ECOWAS' handling of the latest West African crises shows an organization that is continually trying to mature. ECOWAS had a high-level delegation on the ground in Bissau on March 3 (reftel), just after the assassinations, which included Nigerian Foreign Minister Ojo Maduekwe, Dr. Chambas, and Senegalese Foreign Minister Cheikh Gadio. Coordination with international partners thus far has

been assertive and largely productive. Fatah-Musa, a Ghanaian, is also someone to watch. He commands an intuitive, excellent grasp of regional politics, has an impressive resume, good contacts, and seems to entertain thoughts of political office in Ghana some day. He said that had the recent election in Ghana not been handled in the way that it had, Dr. Chambas was considering returning to Ghana to run for the Presidency in the next election; Fatah-Musa's confident assertion to Poloff that he himself "could be a household name" in Ghana with little effort thinly masks his own ambitions or overconfidence. END COMMENT.

18. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.  
SANDERS